



Gardening in PCB Contaminated Soil

Spring 2016

If you garden or eat vegetables grown in soil that contain polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), PCB can get into your body. This could cause health problems. To lower the amount of PCB that gets into your body when you garden or eat vegetables grown in your garden, follow these simple steps:



Clean vegetables well before cooking or eating.

- Throw away old and outer leaves of vegetables.
- Wash all vegetables with cold water. Scrub vegetables with a brush to help remove dirt. Rinse vegetables well before eating.
- Scrub and peel root crops such as carrots, potatoes, turnips, and onions before eating them.



Avoid planting root crops in contaminated soils or grow vegetables in raised beds or containers.

- Grow crops such as tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers, peas, beans, or corn. They are less likely to absorb lead.
- Grow leafy vegetables such as lettuce and root crops (carrots, potatoes) in containers or raised beds filled with PCB-free soil. You can purchase PCB-free soil from nurseries or garden stores.



Do...

- add peat moss, compost, or manure to your soil. These bind the lead in soil so that vegetables absorb less lead.
- keep soil pH at 6.5 or higher so that plants will absorb less lead.
- cover all bare soil in the garden with 2 to 4 inches of lead-free mulch such as wood chips, grass clippings, lead-free soil, or compost.



Do not...

- grow vegetables in the drip zone and around the foundation of older buildings.



ATSDR

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, a public health agency located in Atlanta, Georgia.

Questions about gardening in soil that has PCBs?

Contact ATSDR for more information:

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